

12 May 2022

Gambling Policy Team
Department of Internal Affairs
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Submission on reducing pokies harm

Tēnā koe

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand formally supports the submission by The Salvation Army Oasis dated 27 April 2022 on the proposed changes to pokies and venue regulations. We recommend you look to the submissions from Oasis and the experts at the Problem Gambling Foundation, as they hold core knowledge on gambling harm and work directly with the communities who experience the most harm from pokies in Aotearoa New Zealand.

We write this brief submission to reiterate our support for strengthening pokies regulations to protect the wellbeing of our whānau and communities who are most at risk from gambling harm.

We support strengthening the regulatory framework for pokie machines and venues to minimise harm from this type of gambling. We also support a full review of the Gambling Act 2003 and all subsidiary regulations (alongside a broad review of the Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act 2012) to ensure the whole system is better placed to reduce harm and support whānau and communities.

Māori are more likely to be negatively impacted by gambling-related harm than non-Māori, this could be “due to increased exposure in communities where Māori are more likely to live, and the correlation with other factors which predispose to harmful gambling such as poverty, other addictions, and job insecurity.”¹ It is therefore important that any review and solutions are led and informed by Māori. It is

¹ <https://nzmsj.scholasticahq.com/article/17180.pdf>

also important to include taiohi (youth) in policy development as they are exposed to inter-generational impacts of gambling and are negatively impacted by gambling.²

We know that gambling impacts on our mental health, for example experience of problem gambling increases the likelihood of anxiety and depressive disorders, and an increase in suicidal thoughts.³ A study from Victoria, Australia showed that compared to people who are not gamblers, gamblers are significantly less likely to feel well, and significantly more likely to experience a mental disorder.⁴

Gambling harm in Aotearoa New Zealand also leads to indirect effects on the wellbeing of family, whānau, friends, workmates and acquaintances. For whānau, this could involve having arguments about the time or money spent on gambling, or someone having to go without the essentials because of the lack of money, or bills not being paid. A larger proportion of adults reported that the problems they were experiencing were due to gaming machines according to research by the Ministry of Health in 2009.

Summary

We strongly urge that Aotearoa New Zealand's gambling laws are strengthened to minimise gambling harm and to put the wellbeing of individuals, whānau and communities first. In doing so, the government needs to listen to the experts in gambling-related harm, tāngata Māori and taiohi Māori.

Mauri tū, mauri ora,



Shaun Robinson

Chief Executive

² <http://orapp.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11675>

³ <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/national-gambling-study-secondary-analysis-health-correlates-final-report-7sep20.pdf>

⁴ <https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/problem-gambling-in-people-seeking-treatment-for-mental-illness-61/>